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The New York Times Magazine

APRIL 30, 1972

A Radical, Direct, Simple, Utopian Alternative To Day-Care Centers

By WILLIAM V. SHANNON

WASHINGTON.

I must share the view of those of its supporters who proclaim this to be the most radical piece of legislation to emerge from the 92d Congress.

I also hold the conviction that such far-reaching national legislation should not, must not, be enacted in the absence of a great national debate upon its merit and broad public acceptance of its principles.

Few contend that such a national debate has taken place.

—PRESIDENT NIXON, in a veto message.

One of the most irresponsible statements I have seen in my many years in public life...cruel, hysterical and false.

—SENATOR WALTER MONDALE, commenting on the veto message.

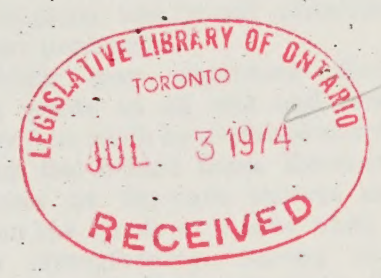
LAST Dec. 9, President Nixon vetoed an antipoverty bill which had as its major component the Comprehensive Child Development Act of 1971, sponsored by Senators Walter Mondale, Minnesota Democrat, and Jacob Javits, New York Republican. The child-development bill, one of the most far-reaching measures ever passed by Congress, ranking in financial cost and social implications with Medicare or Fed-

Uncle Sam as the nation's babysitter—

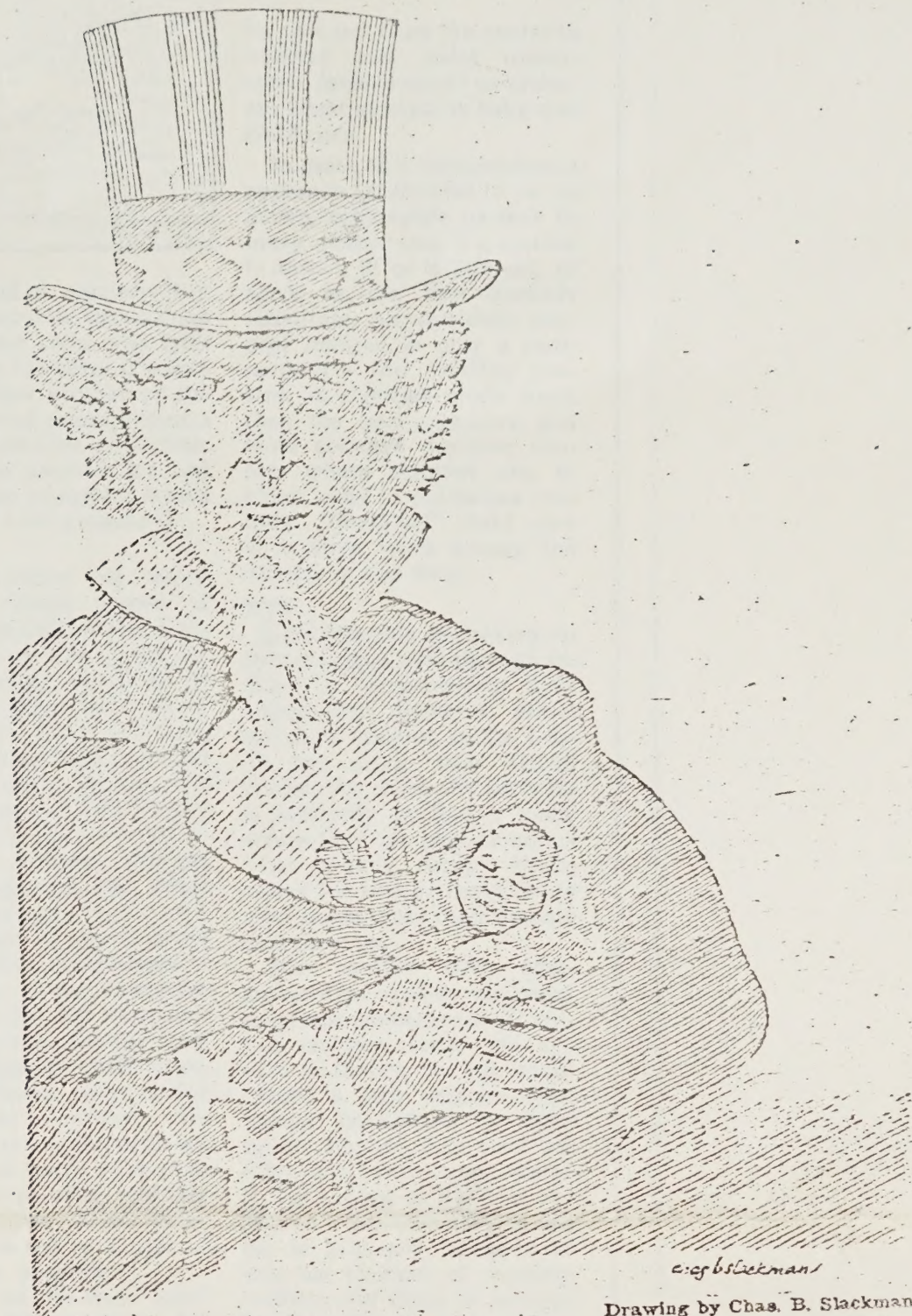
eral aid to education, deserves much more thorough discussion than it has received. The bill has never been the subject of a question at one of Mr. Nixon's (admittedly infrequent) news conferences. It is rarely, if ever, brought up during Sunday TV interviews, in which his Democratic rivals are regular participants. It rarely made the front page of any newspaper until Mr. Nixon vetoed it.

The "great national debate" which President Nixon called for has not taken place but the legislative scene has already been set for passing the bill again. Ignoring G.O.P. predictions of a second Nixon veto, the House of Representatives on Feb. 17 approved a poverty bill which includes a much expanded Head Start program and which Senator Mondale intends to use as a vehicle for adding a revised version of his child-development plan.

If another bill passes Congress this year, President Nixon is sure to veto it again, and conservatives have the votes to sustain that veto. Over the longer term, however, a bill bearing some resemblance to Mondale's is likely, sooner or later, to become



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C. B. Slackman

Drawing by Chas. B. Slackman.

just what the great majority of children don't need, according to the author.

law. The political arithmetic of the growing number of working mothers guarantees that.

If the centers set up under such a law are adequately financed, ideally staffed and well run, they would, in my judgment, help some of those youngsters who are the worst victims of poverty and neglect. The centers are, however, neither necessary nor desirable for the great majority of children. Moreover, because they are likely to be underfinanced, understaffed and overcrowded, I sincerely doubt they will achieve many of their objectives. Unless Congress undergoes a radical change of heart, it will try to do a \$30-billion job on a \$3-billion budget.


Although I am a liberal, I do not share the liberal enthusiasm for day-care centers. Such centers are not a satisfactory or desirable substitute for the full-time care and devotion of a child's own mother. President Nixon may have politically expedient motives of his own, but I nevertheless agree with the premise of his veto message, which stated: "All other factors being equal, good public

policy requires that we enhance rather than diminish both parental authority and parental involvement with children—particularly in those decisive early years when social attitudes and a conscience are formed, and religious and moral principles are first inculcated."

Liberals may deprecate these Nixon words as all wet and reactionary, but much hard-earned human wisdom lies behind them. Excessive emphasis on day-care centers can weaken the family at a time when it needs strengthening. Having said that, however, I do not think the status quo is good enough. I have a radical proposal of my own to advance. It would be an alternative to day care that would enable the poor and the working poor—except those families which are most severely deprived and damaged psychologically—to take care of their own children.

But before advancing my own views, I shall set forth the argument of the advocates of comprehensive child-development

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An alternative to day-care centers



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centers. And it is a powerful argument.

FOR any child, the years from birth to 6 are critical for his physical, intellectual and psychological development. Yet traditionally in the United States, the Government takes no official interest in a child between his arrival, when a birth certificate is required, until he is 6 years old, when the compulsory school attendance law takes effect. The assumption has been that families took care of these early childhood years. Yet the evidence is all around us that for some children, the family system has completely broken down and is not doing the necessary job of nurturing their characters, and preparing them for life. For other children, the family is still a viable emotional unit providing some strengths, but the fathers and mothers are so overwhelmed by adverse circumstances—sickness, ignorance, mental illness, inability to hold a steady job, or inability to cope with competitive, sophisticated city life—that those families need help in preparing their young children for school and later life. Still other children have competent parents who can cope with life in adult terms but who—out of ignorance, or irresponsibility, or selfishness—are not giving priority to their duties as parents; these children also need help.

Society can ignore the needs of the children in these various unfortunate circumstances, but it cannot ignore them indefinitely or without cost. Sooner or later, a sizable number of them are going to show up as juvenile delinquents, as mentally retarded children, as emotionally disturbed patients in institutions, as adolescent drug addicts. Some may survive the school years but show up in prisons as young adult criminals, or in hospitals as mentally ill, or on the welfare rolls as unemployables. One or two may even show up on television screens as a Presidential assassin.

(Why all deprived, damaged children do not come to a dismal end, why some actually develop from this adversity a thriving will to succeed, is a

blessing and a mystery. But one can speculate that behind each hard-hit child who later makes it in life there is someone—an older brother or sister, a devoted grandmother, a minister, a teacher, an athletic coach—who cared a lot and provided the youngster with a model and with guidance.)

THE Mondale bill which President Nixon vetoed is based on the theory that a big investment of money and effort in children, especially in the years from birth to 6, would save some of them from disasters later on and might actually reduce the amount of money that society now has to spend on juvenile-delinquent centers, prisons, mental hospitals, and other kinds of human-repair and rehabilitation. In asserting the Government's comprehensive interest in these formative early years, the bill has many precedents, such as the long campaign against child labor, the public health effort to cut down infant mortality, the White House conferences on children and youth held once a decade since 1909, and the widely popular Head Start program enacted as a part of the poverty program.

Building on the Head Start model, the bill would go far beyond merely providing a convenient place near home or work where an employed mother could leave a child. It would establish child-development centers in every community. A child could get one, two or more meals, depending upon how many hours he stayed each day. A center would contract with outside doctors or clinics to provide medical, dental and psychiatric diagnosis and care. It would begin the education of preschool children and make available to them, as well as to older children, "summer, weekend, vacation and overnight programs." Parents would serve on the board of the center, and, if unemployed, they might be enlisted as volunteer workers or paid employees. In some circumstances, a mother might be paid to care for four or five children—her own as well as others—in her own home. This is called "family day care." Where needed, a professional or a trained volunteer would

be sent out from the center to instruct and assist uneducated, inexperienced or underconfident mothers in baby and child care.

In short, this comprehensive approach is intended to be an active, responsible partner to every mother and, if a mother is absent, ill or indifferent, to serve as the best possible substitute. An ambitious concept realized in only a comparatively few existing centers, it signifies much more than the less expensive and more common day-care centers where children are, in effect, only in protective custody. "Custodial" child care is a dirty word among the experts in this field.

THE Mondale bill covers all children from birth through 14. There is comparatively little controversy, however, about the older children in the 6-to-14 age group who attend school. For them, the problem is primarily to find a place where they can play or otherwise usefully occupy themselves for two or three hours after school until their parents pick them up.

The conflict over comprehensive child-development programs concerns the 22 million children under the age of 6. In theory, the bill would permit a rich woman—Mrs. Nelson Rockefeller or Mrs. Robert Kennedy—to send her child to a development center if she wanted to pay the fee. But, as a practical matter, the bill is primarily intended to help the children of working mothers and those in poverty families. About seven million children in the under-6 age group have mothers who work. (The number of mothers in the work force has doubled since 1950, and the trend seems to be steadily upward.) About four million children live in families which are in dire poverty and about an equal number in families which are above the poverty line but still in straitened circumstances.

Poverty children are not identical with the children of working mothers, although the two groups overlap. In fact, proportionately more mothers work in families with annual incomes above \$10,000 than in families with incomes below \$3,000. This paradox is understandable because more middle-class women have marketable skills and have the money to pay for maids, babysitters, private nursery schools and other forms of child care. But some of the confusion that surrounds the child-development issue is caused by the

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the families in modest economic circumstances with husbands who work but barely earn a subsistence income and wives who work part-time or full-time to pay for a few comforts beyond the family's necessities; these are the "working poor." A second group consists of middle-class women who ordinarily would not have to work when their children are small but who are driven back into the job market prematurely because of divorce, or the death or illness of their husbands. Third, there are the families in which husbands earn a satisfactory income but the women work by choice. These middle-class wives often argue for day care in terms of women's "liberation."

A fourth category might be families in which the husbands earn adequate incomes and wives do not pursue careers, but might do so if high-quality day care were available. In other words, comprehensive day care is not only a response to the increasing number of working mothers but its existence would probably serve to accelerate that trend.

Since the working poor, the widowed or divorced heads of middle-class families, and the "liberated" career women comprise a huge number of people, it is not astonishing that politicians in both parties climbed aboard the comprehensive child-development bandwagon. The bill passed the Senate, 63 to 17. Yet it is the inclusion of these other categories of people that also triggers the opposition. Their coverage makes it unmistakably clear that the Government is not setting out to cope with a limited and—if all goes well—diminishing number of impoverished children. Rather, it is embarking upon a program which could cover virtually all children and would not only recognize but confirm a profound change in the way in which Americans rear their children.

The opposition in and out of Congress has formed on both economic and cultural grounds. In the original version of his bill, Mondale proposed spending \$2-billion in the first year of operation, \$4-billion in the second and \$7-billion in the third. These subsequent authorizations were dropped from the modified version that passed the Senate, and news stories usually referred to the bill as having "a \$2-billion price tag." Once the program was fully under way, however, even if all eligible children

did not participate and many of those who did were charged modest fees, the annual cost would be in the range of \$20-billion to \$30-billion a year. The cost of quality care for children in which food, toys, equipment and medical care are provided is at least \$2,000 a year for each child. Dr. Jerome Kagan, chairman of the White House Conference's panel on day care, offered these rough estimates in Senate testimony:

"As you might expect, private centers run more efficiently than public centers. My impression is that, if you are working with preschool children 2½ to 5 years of age, \$45 a week [per child] will run a pretty good private center. A public center which has more bureaucracy, will probably be given \$55 or \$60 a week. You have to add 10 to 20 per cent for infants. It is more expensive to have a center for the first two years of life.... If this becomes a popular and approved way of raising American children, one could have half the population of children aged 0 to 6 requesting day care. You could spend all the money you want: 13 million children at \$60 a week, which is \$3,000 a child a year. If you pause to multiply those figures you have an enormous amount of money—\$39-billion."

AS it developed, President Nixon vetoed the bill for broad reasons having little to do with fee schedules or financial cost. The cost is probably not a decisive consideration for those on either side of the argument.

It gives hostile critics a handle with which to attack the bill, but most conservatives, when candid, admit that they would not like the program even if it cost only half as much. Liberals meanwhile dismiss the financial argument with the assertion that if this country can afford to subsidize aerospace companies and build a space shuttle, it can afford to invest huge sums in its own children.

More fundamental to the debate is the philosophy underlying the bill, which President Nixon attacked head-on, thereby evoking the angriest response from the bill's advocates. Liberals were quick to point out that his veto was a sop to the right wing of the President's party and that the Presidential candidacy of Representative John Ashbrook, a convinced conservative ideologue, may have had

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fact that mothers in quite different circumstances — the highly paid advertising woman who lives in Scarsdale, the factory worker's wife trying to eke out her budget in Queens, the 17-year-old unwed mother just arrived in Bedford-Stuyvesant from a farm in South Carolina—are lumped together for purposes of discussion, and arguments which would be applicable to the family circumstances of one woman are used to justify or attack programs to help women in entirely different circumstances.

Although children from every kind of family could conceivably participate, the real emotional force behind the drive for comprehensive child development is the desire of liberal, compassionate people to improve the chances in life of children from the nation's worst-off families — migrant laborers and sharecroppers, unemployed miners in Appalachia, impoverished Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Indians and blacks. Two-thirds of the places in the child-development centers would be reserved for the children of these low-income families.

In testimony before a Senate subcommittee, John Niemeyer, president of the Bank Street College of Education in New York City, graphically described the plight of families trapped in a city slum. "These families needed all kinds of help," Niemeyer reported. "Typically there was a mother with four or five children, a father not in the picture regularly — although that is not true in all of the cases—and the needs run in this order, as far as we could ascertain them:

"First of all, these adults are physically ill. Secondly, they live in constant physical fear—and very real fear. Fear of the pusher, fear of the person breaking in and stealing everything out of your meager little apartment, fear of the children getting run over in the heavy traffic in the streets....

"And then the third great need, particularly on the part of mothers, is help with loneliness, with a tremendous feeling of vacancy in their lives. In fact, I am inclined to believe one of the problems that surrounds the whole question of... birth control, and so on, with people of this kind, is the problem of loneliness. Because I feel that many of these mothers, [when they have a baby] for two or three years have something to love and to fondle, and so on. I really

think this fills a void in their lives, and I don't think that a knowledge of birth control will make a significant difference as long as we have these particular human emotional needs....

"Now this seems almost unbelievable, but I think that it is easy for us to put ourselves into the position of a person like this, women who spend all day in bed because there is nothing in the home except a television. And the television, of course, has been the great pacifier and mesmerizer of children because almost the minute they can see, they are propped up to watch this

and I kept coming back to the view that we have to reach these children in their first five years and do everything we can to improve their chances in life. For most of us, this is a great, rich, wonderful society full of hope and opportunity. But some people are outside the mainstream of American life. Are we content to say that hundreds of thousands of children because they were cheated at birth and in their early years are to be condemned to lives of failure and frustration?

"Consider a child, white or black or brown, who grows up in a community where he

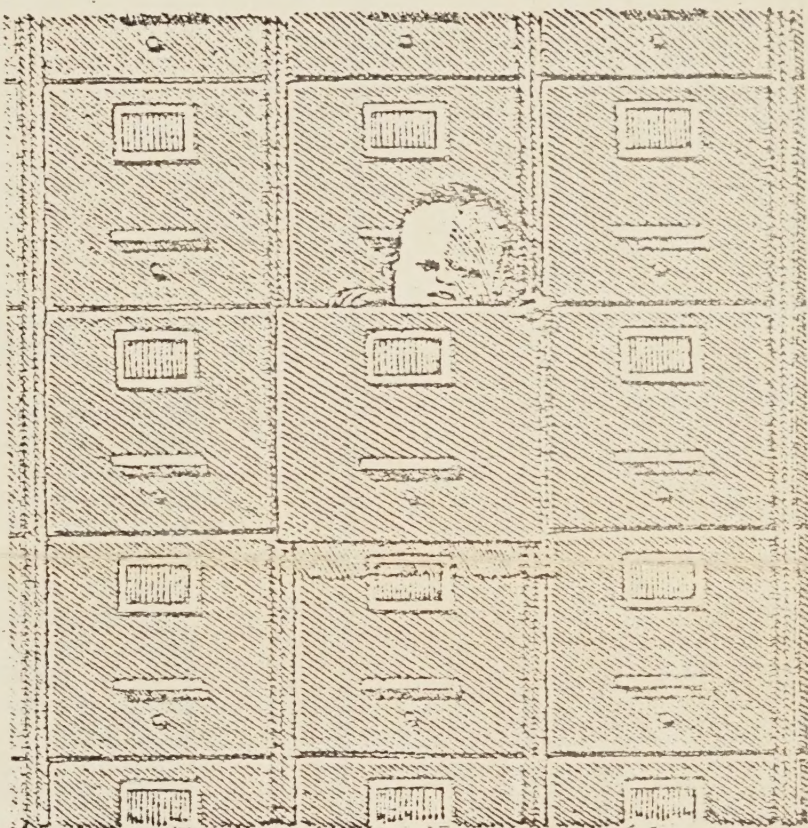


image that is flickering there—it's almost, I think, like hypnotism."

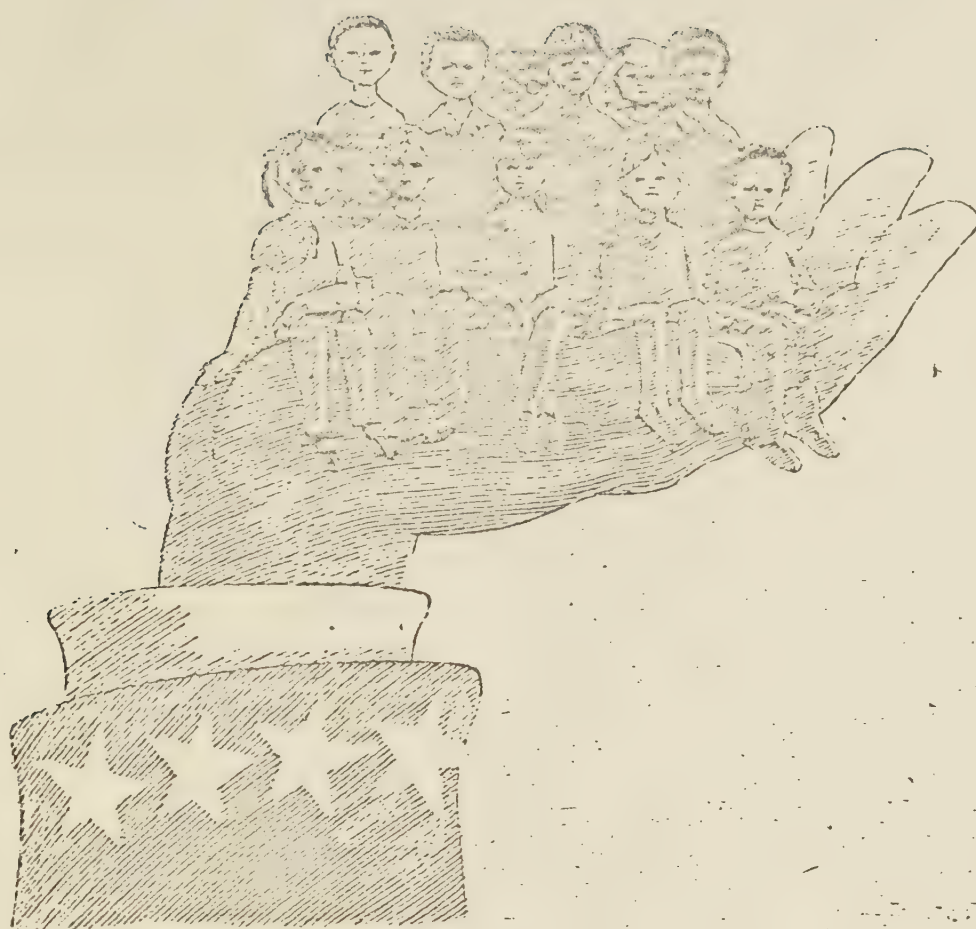
In what is rather an understatement, Niemeyer concluded: "These are the parents and families for which intervention is necessary."

Not all welfare mothers and their children are in the desperate circumstances described by Niemeyer. Some have personal strengths. But the apathy, physical squalor and fear are brutal realities. So are the low-grade infections and correctible physical defects which sap their energies. The question is what the state can effectively do to help. In an interview, Senator Mondale told me:

"In the last several years of traveling around the country and holding hearings on different aspects of the poverty problem, I examined all the different approaches — manpower training, enriched education, rehousing, and so on—

doesn't have enough to eat, lives in squalid, unsanitary housing, grows up without books or any kind of help, grows up in a broken home, grows up amid a depressed environment, without any health care, and then goes to what is often the worst school in town. The reactionaries of this country are trying to describe efforts to help that child as welfare, which is the code word by which we deliver money from 'decent, hard-working Americans' to this child and others like him, when in fact the issue is justice, permitting children to have the same chance in American society."

IF a desire to improve the lot of impoverished children is one force behind proposals for comprehensive child development, the program's political appeal is enhanced by the benefits it offers three other groups of families: There are



more than a little to do with Mr. Nixon's decision.

Most conservatives in Congress bitterly oppose President Nixon's Family Assistance Plan, better known as "welfare reform," a creditable if modest attempt to introduce the principle of a minimum income for every family. In opposing the Comprehensive Child-Development Bill, they argue in much the same way as they do against President Nixon's Family Assistance Plan. Unstated but clearly visible is their conviction that a guaranteed minimum income for poor families would merely encourage them to have more babies. Their second conviction is that the poor are financial failures solely because of moral turpitude or personal weakness. If they are poor, they deserve to suffer the consequences. (This is the converse of the sentimental liberal view that the poor cannot be held morally accountable to any degree for their behavior and that society is to blame for everything.) Rejecting the evidence of new psychology and old common sense, conservatives insist upon applying a rationalistic carrot-and-stick economic theory as if welfare mothers were so many calculating Benthamites. If only the right economic pressures can be found, these conservatives believe, welfare mothers can be squeezed off welfare and onto private payrolls—as if a woman's employability in the market place were the highest test

of her moral worth or her usefulness to society.

IN trying to sell the Family Assistance Plan, Mr. Nixon has pandered to these conservative prejudices—and involved himself in a glaring contradiction. Thus, his welfare bill would provide \$750-million annually to pay for day-care centers for the children of welfare mothers, so that these women can be trained and can work. It would apply initially to women with children over 6 and, after a short time, to those with children over 3. But in vetoing the Mondale child-development bill last December, Mr. Nixon piously warned against committing "the vast moral authority of the national Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing over against the family-centered approach." Why is it right to coerce welfare mothers to put their children in Government-financed day-care centers in order to go to work and wrong to assist other women who voluntarily want to do the same thing?

Liberals and radicals, on the other hand, argue vigorously in behalf of comprehensive child-development centers for reasons which have only indirectly, if at all, to do with children and the family. They want child-care centers to energize the parents and get them involved in the community. Mrs. Maurien McKinley, associate director of the Black Child Development In-

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stitute in Washington, expressed a view put forward by numerous witnesses: "We believe that child-development centers can be the catalyst for total community development. It is to the advantage of the entire nation to view the provision of day-care/child-development services within the context of the need for a readjustment of societal power relationships. . . . As day-care centers are utilized to catalyze development in black and other communities, the enhanced political and economic power that results can provide effective leverage for the improvement of the over-all social and economic condition of the nation."

Translated from sociological jargon, this is the community-action theory which underlies the poverty program and the Model Cities program. It is the theory that only if the poor are organized and power taken away from "the Establishment" is progress possible. All the establishments—the politicians, the schoolteachers, the social workers, the doctors and medical administrators—are regarded as more harmful than helpful to the poor because of their heavy-handed paternalism. Without getting into the pros and cons of this complicated argument, one can see that the theory of community action has more to do with helping adults to fight City Hall than with helping fathers and mothers to rear their children.

POLITICS aside, however, President Nixon's argument against actively encouraging the shift from the family to the day-care center as the prime agent in child-rearing goes to the heart of the issue. Are child-development centers desirable for any children other than the most damaged and deprived? The unpopular truth is that any community facility—call it a day-care center or a child-development center—is at best an inadequate, unsatisfactory substitute, and at worst a dangerous, destructive substitute for a child's own mother.

In the months of infancy, a child's whole universe consists of himself and the person who feeds him, dresses him and responds to his cries and other signals for attention. Although the development of a human being is imperfectly understood since babies cannot talk, intensive research by Dr. Margaret Mahler and other experts on what psychiatrists call the

"separation-individuation process" shows that in the period from approximately 6 months of age to 2 years, critically important events are taking place in the formation of a child's personality. During those months, he learns that his mother is not just an extension of himself, that he is a person in his own right, that his mother can leave him and that there are other persons in the world besides himself and her.

Superficially, it is true that anybody can feed a baby or change his diapers. But in the most profound emotional sense, a baby's whole sense of himself depends upon the warmth and consistency of the relationship that he has with the person who takes care of him. If he is indifferently or inconsistently treated by a succession of various adults—as he would tend to be if left in a day-care center for 8 or 10 hours a day—he is truly a deprived child. Psychological research indicates that anxieties, depression, passivity and other serious handicaps may develop. From 2 to 3 years of age, a toddler learning to talk and to run about can begin to stutter or suffer other impairments, from slight to serious, if he is subjected to severe emotional upheaval—such as a shift from family care to day care. In the years from 3 to 6, other important though less dramatic stages of development unfold in the child's life. For these reasons, most well-run nursery schools which serve middle-class and upper-class families rarely take children before they are 2½ or 3 years old, and do not keep them more than three or four hours a day until they are at least 5 years old.

Day-care centers have become important institutions in this country in recent years as the number of working mothers has increased, but other nations have had much longer and more extensive experience with them. Dr. Dale Meers, a Washington psychiatrist, has reported on a study of programs in the Soviet Union, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Israel and France. The report, published by the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and entitled, "International Day Care: A Selective Review and Psychoanalytic Critique," is hardly an encouraging document. In the Soviet Union, Dr. Meers reports, senior officials who run the day-care centers do not make use of them for their own children. "Their preference [is] to use their

incomes to employ someone to care for their children at home." Dr. Meers found that Hungarian officials hoped eventually to eliminate day care for children under 3 because of the "manifest unhappiness" of the child. In Czechoslovakia, the best day care "appeared hygienic, sterile and depressing." In every country, Communist and non-Communist alike, officials encountered serious problems of staffing and rapid turnover.

"Nursing staff covertly resist continuity of care of one or more babies. Indeed, it was a common experience, internationally, that care-givers often could not readily identify their children by name and, with babies, did not know with certitude whether each one had been fed. . . . The younger and less active child in the day nursery, the smaller the amount of attention he received.

"Multiple mothering all too frequently provides an uncoordinated octopus. The multiplicity of care-givers, their overlapping of shifts, their replaceability for illness or holidays, their departures for other employment, all leave the very young child accommodating first to one and then to another."

The enthusiasts of day care more often point to Israel where many children are communally reared in the kibbutz. But more sophisticated advocates agree that Americans have a tendency to idealize the Israeli situation. "One must draw on one's own cultural tradition, one's own identities," for the institutions that will solve the problems, Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner of Cornell University observed to the Mondale subcommittee. Israel is a small, beleaguered nation with the uniquely high morale of a people who feel themselves under siege and fighting for their very existence. No comparable sense of common danger and common destiny informs communal life in the United States, a vast, rich, diverse and relatively sheltered country. A kibbutz, moreover, is a small, agricultural community where the parents work in the fields close by the "children's house" and are available to their children for three or four hours a day in the late afternoon and early evening.

Israeli practices in communal child rearing are the subject of intense controversy both within Israel and among outside ex-



perts. The evidence is not all in because really thorough scientific studies are only now being conducted, but there is some indication, as Dr. Bruno Bettelheim reported in his book, "The Children of the Dream," that kibbutz-raised children show significant personality differences from children raised in the conventional family. For example, the kibbutz children get along well with their peers and are very loyal to their group, but often seem incapable of deep emotional attachments and creative intensity.

In short, the experience of other countries with state-provided communal child care on a large scale does not suggest that this is a course on which the United States should enthusiastically embark. The risks for many, though not all, children range from mild neuroses and developmental lags to serious maladjustments.

Nor does the evidence cited in the Mondale Subcommittee's own hearings support the exaggerated claims made for parental involvement and control. The A.F.L.-C.I.O., a principal supporter of the bill, submitted a lengthy, glowing report on a day-care center operated in Chicago by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union for its own members. The report states: "Because the parents work, they are not free to come into the center during the day to investigate its benefits; after work, they are tired, with little interest in coming to eve-

ning parents' meetings. Therefore, education of the parents with regard to center capabilities is a slow process. There has been only one parents' meeting held, on a Sunday. Attendance was 50 per cent. The parents do bring the children in the morning and pick them up at night, so there is a brief opportunity to see what the children are doing and to visit with the staff."

That is the actual degree of parent participation in a center which the AFL-CIO describes as "a Rolls-Royce of day care."

THERE is a radical alternative to child-care centers which I believe would avoid the staffing difficulties, the psychic risks and the other drawbacks of communal care: Pay mothers to take care of their own children in their own homes.

Many years ago, Dr. Benjamin Spock put forward the ideal solution in his characteristically simple, straightforward language. In "Baby and Child Care," he wrote: "Some mothers have to work to make a living. Usually their children turn out all right because some reasonably good arrangement is made for their care. But others grow up neglected and maladjusted. It would save money in the end if the Government paid a comfortable allowance to all mothers of young children who would otherwise be compelled to work. . . . It doesn't make sense to let mothers go to work making dresses in a fac-

tory or tapping typewriters in an office, and have them pay other people to do a poorer job of bringing up their children."

A comparison of costs suggests that the Federal Government, if it chooses to do so, can as easily pay a mother to take care of her own children as to finance them in a day-care facility. Most working mothers, unless they have high professional qualifications, would consider themselves fortunate if they found work paying \$150 a week (\$7,800 a year). After deductions for Federal and state income taxes, Social Security, union dues, lunches and carfare, their take-home pay would be about \$100 a week, or \$5,200 a year. To provide the kind of comprehensive child care which the Mondale bill envisages could easily cost \$2,600 a year a child. If that sum were paid directly to the mother of two children, she would have as much income as if she went out to work.

Such an approach would not solve all the problems of all the broken and overwhelmed families at the bottom of the heap. They and their children would still need the kind of direct help that social workers have long tried to provide. But the direct approach would meet the needs of the millions of children of the working poor and of those middle-class single parents — widows, widowers and divorcees — who are perfectly capable of coping with life and taking care of their own children if only they had more money. The financially well-off mothers who work only for their own satisfaction

would not benefit, because any family allowance they received could be largely offset by higher taxes.

TRUE equality between the sexes is wholly desirable, but the liberation of women must not become a potential defeat for young preschool children. Women should not try to combine a full-time job with raising small children. It is a rare and exceptionally gifted woman who does something more important in the outside world than she does during those critical first six years when she is helping to form the personality and character of a child.

Essentially, it is a matter of making a rational choice. If a young woman decided to join the Peace Corps, she would know that she was signing up for two years of her life. If she decided to go to medical school, she would know that she was committing herself to four years of hard work. I suggest that if a woman decides to have a baby, she should know that she is signing up for six years before she can return to work full time.

The direct, simple method of paying parents to stay at home with their children is perhaps utopian, basically because Americans do not believe in the family as much as they think they do. No one can say when or if Americans will reinvigorate those values which make parenthood the most serious human vocation, which are essential to sustain happy, effective families and which, if practiced, would truly make this country what it now mistakenly thinks it is — a child-centered society. ■

